US Army Corps
of Engineers

Sacramento District
1325 J Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-2922

Public Notice

Number: 200575507
Date: February 20, 2006
Comments Due: March 13, 2006

SUBJECT: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District, (Corps) is evaluating a permit application to construct the Trappers Lake Campground-Spring Development Project, which would result in impacts to approximately 0.01 acre of waters of the United States, including wetlands, adjacent to Trappers Lake. This notice is to inform interested parties of the proposed activity and to solicit comments. This notice may also be viewed at the Corps web site at http://www.spk.usace.army.mil/organizations/cespk-co/regulatory.html.

AUTHORITY: This application is being evaluated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act for the discharge of dredged or fill material in waters of the United States.

APPLICANT: USDA Forest Service
Contact: Ms. Jo A. Ives-Water System Manager
White River National Forest
Post Office Box 948
Glenwood Springs, Colorado 81602
Telephone: (970) 945-3236

LOCATION: The project site is located in the White River National Forest near the Wall Lake Trailhead at the Trappers Lake Lodge and Campground areas, within Section 3, Township 1 South, Range 88 West, Garfield County, Colorado, and can be seen on the Big Marvine Peak USGS Topographic Quadrangle.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is proposing to modify an existing spring development to service recreational needs, trailheads and campgrounds at Trappers Lake to meet existing State of Colorado public potable water systems requirements. Based on the available information, the overall project purpose is to modify an existing public drinking water source for potable water system compliance.

The applicant believes there is a need to re-establish and provide a public potable water supply as the nearest current potable water is located at the Buford Store or the Towns of Meeker or Yampa, 20 and 50 miles away, respectively. The attached drawings and photographs provide additional project details.

The applicant must replace the existing water supply system to meet State of Colorado potable water standards. The applicant proposes a new collection system which will be covered with a waterproof membrane and contoured to enhance water runoff to protect the spring from surface contamination. The spring re-development and installation of the impervious membrane would effect approximately 1/4 acre in the area immediately surrounding the spring source (upland area). A fence will be built around this area to prohibit large animals from impacting and contaminating the spring source. New spring boxes will be installed at the site. A pipeline from the spring to the existing well house will be installed to bring the water to the well house for chlorination purposes and then access the distribution system through existing pipelines to the storage tank.
To meet State requirements the spring development must capture the entire flow of water from the spring.

Excess flow will be returned back to the streambed below the spring collection boxes, which will be located a few feet below the original spring opening. The maximum amount of water used by the campground will be five (5) gallons per minute (gpm) due to flow regulators within the water line. This is only a fraction of the sixty-five (65) gpm average flow the spring currently produces. Additionally, a trail access approximately 3/4 mile in length for ATV type vehicles to the spring location will be necessary along the pipeline route. Trail use will be restricted to authorized individuals only and not the general public. Trail and pipeline development will not impact waters of the United States.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Site History and Environmental Setting. A spring, located at 39 59' 21"N, 107 15' 04"W in NAD27 datum, has provided water to the Trappers Lake Recreational Area (TLRA) since the campgrounds and trailheads were built in the early 1960's. It was used continuously each camping season, June to October, through 2001. At that time the State Department of Health, in conjunction with the Water Quality Control Division, determined that the spring was or could be under the direct influence of surface water and thereby, not in compliance with requirements for a public water system. The TLRA has been without a potable water supply since 2001.

The project area is located in a spruce fir over-story that was completely destroyed by the Big Fish Fire of 2002. Grasses and forbs have gradually reseeded the immediate area and are providing adequate groundcover to limit erosion. Standing dead (burned) spruce fir surrounds the spring area.

Alternatives. The applicant has provided information concerning recent project alternatives to spring redevelopment. A sanitary survey, conducted in the late 1990's by the State of Colorado, revealed the possibility of surface water influences to the spring. Subsequently, the applicant began an effort to rehabilitate the entire water system to upgrade to current sanitary standards. The applicant's decision was to drill a ground water well as a means of best protecting against surface influence while reducing treatment actions required. In 1999, three water wells were drilled near the existing spring development. The first two of these drill holes did not locate a water-bearing formation. The third drill hole resulted in a low-volume, but producing well. The producing well and necessary treatment, storage and distribution infrastructure was brought on-line with a total cost exceeding $250,000.

The producing well was pumped and tested periodically during the construction process and revealed no signs of failure. However, in 2004, when the water system was started for the season, the well ceased production. Redevelopment efforts at this well site have proved futile. The applicant contracted a geotechnical firm to conduct seismic and geologic testing of the area which revealed that the producing well was completed into a lens of water that had little or no recharge capability. The study also concluded the nearby geology and clay formations would make further attempts at well drilling a poor investment as water would not be expected to meet necessary production volumes.

During the 2002 recreation season, the applicant attempted to haul potable water to the site from Meeker, Colorado, a distance of 50 miles. To provide potable hauled water to approximately 300 people on a regular basis, the applicant has determined this activity as cost prohibitive. The applicant states that water hauling costs, accumulated over a short period of time, would equal the cost of installing and maintaining the existing potable water system. With water well and water hauling options eliminated, the applicant has turned its attention back to the original water source-the existing spring, to supply the needs of the recreating public for the foreseeable future.
The current development at the spring includes a 3" pipe that diverts only part of the water flow into existing concrete holding boxes and then on to the campground area. In order to meet State requirements, the entire spring flow must be captured and then diverted or overflowed by-way-of sanitary methods. The attached drawings and specifications indicate the design proposed to meet these requirements.

Additional information concerning project alternatives may be available from the applicant or their agent. Other alternatives may develop during the review process for this permit application.

All reasonable project alternatives, in particular those which may be less damaging to the aquatic environment, will be considered.

Mitigation. The Corps requires that applicants consider and use all reasonable and practical measures to avoid and minimize impacts to aquatic resources. If the applicant is unable to avoid or minimize all impacts, the Corps may require compensatory mitigation. Overall water diversion will not change in capacity from historic use. Impacts to the immediate spring area will be minimal. The pipeline will avoid crossing waters of the United States. All construction and pipeline installation will take place outside of the Flat Tops Wilderness Area. The applicant is proposing to reset a new spring box, after the existing spring box is removed, with the least possible ground disturbance in order to avoid adversely affecting the spring's production. The area immediately above the spring development will be sloped and contoured to enhance water runoff away from the spring. The disturbed area will be allowed to return to natural vegetative state once the membrane has been installed to prevent surface water contamination to the spring.

Overflow from the spring box will be directed back into the existing stream channel within less than 50 feet of the current entry point. The spring currently surfaces in an area with fairly rapid fall away from the source area, resulting in very little wetland-type habitat surrounding the spring. The wetlands downstream of the source will not be impacted as the ultimate flow and pattern will not change. Mature woody and herbaceous vegetation around the spring site was impacted by the Big Fish Fire. The resulting and current vegetation setting consists of standing dead timber and new growth fireweed.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORIZATIONS: Water quality certification or a waiver, as required under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment is required for this project. The applicant has indicated they will be applying for certification.

HISTORIC PROPERTIES: Based on the available information (including applicant's report entitled Environmental Assessment, Trappers Lake Spring Development, dated September 2005 and a concurrence letter from the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office, dated December 13, 2005), cultural resources are not within the project's area of potential effect.

ENDANGERED SPECIES: Programmatic consultation (1993) between the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been completed pursuant to Biological Opinion number GJ-6-C0-93-F-036. The above determinations are based on information provided by the applicant and our preliminary review.

EVALUATION FACTORS: The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impacts, including cumulative impacts, of the described activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the described activity, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the described activity will be considered, including the cumulative effects thereof; among those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. The activity's impact on the public interest will include application of the Section 404(b)(1) guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency (40 CFR Part 230).

The Corps is soliciting comments from the public, Federal, State, and local agencies and officials, Indian tribes, and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps to determine whether to issue, modify,

condition, or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

SUBMITTING COMMENTS: Written comments, referencing Public Notice 200575507, must be submitted to the office listed below on or before March 13, 2006:

Mr. Mark Gilfillan, Project Manager
US Army Corps of Engineers, Sacramento District
Colorado/Gunnison Basin Regulatory Office
400 Rood Avenue, Room 142
Grand Junction, Colorado 81501-2563
Email: Mark.A.Gilfillan@usace.army.mil

The Corps is particularly interested in receiving comments related to the proposal's probable impacts on the affected aquatic environment and the secondary and cumulative effects. Anyone may request, in writing, that a public hearing be held to consider this application. Requests shall specifically state, with particularity, the reason(s) for holding a public hearing. If the Corps determines that the information received in response to this notice is inadequate for thorough evaluation, a public hearing may be warranted. If a public hearing is warranted, interested parties will be notified of the time, date, and location. Please note that all comment letters received are subject to release to the public through the Freedom of Information Act. If you have questions or need additional information please contact the applicant or the Corps' project manager Mr. Gilfillan at telephone number (970) 243-1199, extension 15, or by email at Mark.A.Gilfillan@usace.army.mil.

Attachments: 3 drawings and 4 photographs